

Message Text

SECRET

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17

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 AF-06 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 OMB-01

EUR-12 IGA-02 AID-05 /083 W
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R 290345Z JAN 76

FM AMEMBASSY MUSCAT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1797

INFO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI

AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DOHA

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMEMBASSY SANA

AMEMBASSY MANAMA

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

SECDEF WASHDC

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER

CINCUSNAVEUR

COMIDEASTFOR

S E C R E T MUSCAT 099

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MARR BA

SUBJECT: REGIONAL SUPPORT FOR MIDEASTFOR

REF: STATE 17267 (DTG 230403Z JAN 76)

1. BASED ON CONVERSATIONS OVER A PERIOD OF TIME, EMBASSY CONCLUDES THAT OMANGOV ATTITUDE TOWARDS MIDEASTFOR IS UNCHANGED AND AKIN TO THAT OF SEVERAL OTHER CONSERVATIVE REGIMES IN AREA: PROGRAMMED DEPARTURE WILL BE SOMETHING OF A LOSS IN TERMS OF COUNTERING RADICAL INFLUENCES IN AREA, BUT ISSUE IS NOT OF SUFFICIENT IMPORTANCE AS TO MERIT OMANI

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INITIATIVE TO TRY TO GET GOB TO CHANGE ITS MIND.

2. HAVING SYNTHESIZED OMANGOV ATTITUDES IN THIS FASHION, WE WOULD POINT OUT THAT THIS PASSIVE REGRET MASKS HIGHER DEGREE OF POLITICAL SOPHISTICATION THAN WE SOMETIMES WANT TO CONCEDE TO AREA GOVERNMENTS. IN FIRST PLACE, OMANIS CONCLUDE (PROBABLY RIGHTLY) THAT MIDEASTFOR WOULD NOT BECOME DIRECTLY INVOLVED IN AREA DISPUTES; CERTAINLY USG/USN WOULD BE SLOW TO TAKE SIDES IN ANY SCRAP BETWEEN OUR SAUDI AND IRANIAN FRIENDS. LIKEWISE, IT IS HIGHLY UNLIKELY THAT USG WOULD BE INVITED OR WOULD RESPOND EVEN IF ASKED TO BECOME INVOLVED IN LOCALIZED SQUABBLES--I.G. KUWAITI-IRAQI, QATARI-BAHRAINI, OR HOST OF OTHER CONCEIVABLE SCENARIOS. IN SAME VEIN, AND ALTHOUGH OMANIS WOULD LIKE TO SEE USN WITHDRAWAL TIED TO DIMINUTION OF SOVIET PRESENCE IN IRAQ, THEY PROBABLY FEEL POWERLESS TO BRING THIS ABOUT. FINALLY, THEY ASSUME THAT LONG-TERM USG INTERESTS WILL PERSIST AND BE SERVED THROUGH OCCASIONAL FLEET PRESENCE/VISITS FROM FARTHER AFIELD.

3. GIVEN THIS REASONING, OMANGOV IS AMONG THOSE WHICH WOULD OFFER TO SUPPORT INITIATIVE FROM, SAY, SAUDIS ON THIS ISSUE; HOWEVER, IN SO OFFERING THEY SPEAK FROM CONFIDENCE THAT THIS EXPRESSION OF LATENT SUPPORT WILL NOT BE PUT TO THE TEST. SOME IN OMANGOV, AS ELSEWHERE (BASED ON REPORTS FROM OTHER EMBASSIES) SEE WITHDRAWAL AS ELIMINATING A POLITICAL LIABILITY (PRESENCE OF "IMPERIALISTS") AT MINIMAL COST IN TERMS OF SECURITY EITHER OF OMAN PER SE OR OF AREA AT LARGE.

4. OMANIS AND LIKEMINDED GOVERNMENTS IN REGION MAY BE MISTAKEN IN THIS ATTITUDE. BUT AGAIN, THEY MAY BE CORRECT. CERTAINLY IN OUR MOVES RE DIEGO GARCIA WE HAVE SIGNALLED OUR INTENTION TO SUSTAIN OUR PRESENCE AND INTEREST, ALTHOUGH ON A MORE REMOTE AND PERHAPS LESS VISIBLE SCALE. HENCE, EMBASSY MUSCAT AGREES WITH EMBASSY JIDDA'S CONCLUSION THAT ONLY WAY TO GET AREA GOVERNMENTS TO WEIGH IN WITH GOB IS FOR US TO ELEVATE ISSUE TO HIGHEST LEVELS; THIS SHOULD BE DONE ONLY IF USG HAS DETERMINED THAT CONTINUED PRESENCE OF MIDEASTFOR IS PRIMARY INTEREST. CERTAINLY IN OMANI-U.S. BILATERAL CONTEXT, THIS WOULD BE HARD THESIS TO SUPPORT.

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